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ABSTRACT

In 1988, the Delaware State legislature provided for the development of profile reports (PRs) on all full-time public high schools in the state. To determine the impact of the high school PRs, this study addressed the following: (1) public awareness of the PR program; (2) the percentage of the public that received a high school profile; (3) public impressions of the profile; and (4) additional data that should have been included in the PRs but was not. Five schools were selected; 400 building administrators, district school board members, parent organization officers, and school advisory committee members from each school received a 12-item survey developed for the study. Half of the professional staff and about 300 parents from each school were represented. Interviews were also held with a parent/community group from each school. Responses were received from 452 (22.6%) of those surveyed; about 73% of the respondents were parents. Twenty-seven percent of all respondents were aware of the PR program, and 15% acknowledged receiving a report, with 42% of all school staff receiving a PR. Respondents generally found the PR data easy to understand and helpful. Many would have liked data regarding comparisons with other schools to have been included in the PRs. Although they apparently were not widely read, the PRs generally were considered to provide important data. Four tables provide study data. The survey instrument is included. (SLD)

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HIGH SCHOOL PROFILE IMPACT STUDY

STATE OF DELAWARE

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
DOVER, DELAWARE 19903

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HIGH SCHOOL PROFILE
IMPACT STUDY

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HIGH SCHOOL PROFILE IMPACT STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The Delaware School Profile Program was initiated with the State Legislature's passing of the 1989 Budget Bill in October of 1988. The Bill provided for a state supervisor in the Delaware Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to coordinate the development of a program that would provide comprehensive information about the performance of individual public schools and the challenges they face.

The initial task was to produce profile reports on all full-time, comprehensive public high schools within the state. This culminated in the release of a set of 28 individual high school reports by Governor Castle in April 1990. It is planned to disseminate middle level school profile reports in 1991, and the elementary school profile reports will be completed in 1992.

At the request of the State Board of Education, a study was initiated to determine the impact of the high school profile reports. This study was designed by the Research and Evaluation Division of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to assess the public's knowledge, exposure, and impressions of the school profile reports. Specifically it was designed to address four questions: (1) to what extent the public was aware of the school profile program, (2) what percentage of the public had received a high school profile prior to this study, (3) what the public's impression was of the profile, and (4) what additional information not presented in the profiles should have been included.

This report summarizes the findings of the impact study.

METHODOLOGY

A twelve-item survey was developed to investigate the impact of the high school profile reports (see Appendix). The survey consisted of three items that dealt with the demographics of respondents, two items that dealt with respondents' knowledge of the profiles, two items that dealt with the understandability of the profiles, two items that dealt with presentation of important information, one item that dealt with the physical appearance of the profiles, and two items that asked for additional comments regarding the profiles.

Five high schools, Christiana, Glasgow, Newark, Dover and Seaford, encompassing the three school districts of Christina, Capital and Seaford, were selected for the study. The Capital and Seaford districts each contain one high school -- Dover and Seaford, respectively, and Christina contains three high schools -- Christiana, Glasgow, and Newark. These schools were selected so one district from each of the three counties in the state would be included in the study. In addition, administrators from each of the three districts were members of the School Profile Working Committee, familiar with the program, and willing to provide assistance.

The survey was sent out to 2,000 individuals -- 400 from each high school. All building administrators, district school board members, parent organization officers, and school advisory committee members received a survey. In addition, random sampling was used to select 50% of the professional staff and approximately 300 parents from each school. Mailing lists were provided by each high school.

Respondents received a copy of the high school profile for the high school with which they were affiliated, along with an impact survey. Each survey was color-coded so the high school could be identified. Respondents were asked to read the high school profile, complete the enclosed survey, and mail the survey back to DPI in a self-addressed stamped envelope. Respondents were also informed that their responses would be anonymous.

In addition to the survey, the State Supervisor of the School Profile Program met with a parent/community group from each of the five high schools. These meetings provided an opportunity for input from parent groups regarding the profiles and an opportunity to have their questions regarding the profiles answered by the State Supervisor.

RESULTS

Impact Survey

Results of the study are presented in the following section. Results were tabulated using the Statview statistical package. Percentages are provided for the overall sample. In addition, comparisons are made between the three school districts and between parents and school staff. For these comparisons, school staff include those who indicated they are either a school administrator or school staff.

Survey Response

Of the 2,000 surveys distributed, 452 or 22.6% were returned to the Department of Public Instruction. District response rates were similar with 24.2% for Seaford, 23.2% Capital and 26.8% Christina. Of the 452 surveys returned, 73.2% of the respondents were parents, 18.8% school staff, 3.1% administrators, 2.2% school board members, 2.2% school advisory group members, and .5% parent group officers. Sixty-one percent of those who returned the survey were female, while 39% were male.

Knowledge of the School Profile Program

In order to determine the extent of the public's knowledge of the school profile program, respondents were asked if they had heard of the program prior to the survey. Twenty seven percent of all respondents were aware of the program. However, differences were observed within the districts with 40% from Seaford, 33% from Capital and 20% from Christina responding that they had heard of the profiles prior to the survey. Sixteen percent of all parents and 64% of all school staff responded they had heard about the school profile program.

Receipt of a High School Profile Report

When asked if they had received a High School Profile prior to this mailing, 15% of the respondents said that they had received a profile. Within the districts it was found that 32% of the respondents from Seaford, 19% from Capital and 8% from Christina had received a profile. Forty two percent of all school staff received a profile prior to this mailing, compared to only 9% of all parents.

Impressions of the High School Profile

The public's impressions of the school profile reports were assessed in three areas: appearance, understandability, and presentation of important information about their high school.

Respondents were asked to rate the overall appearance of the High School Profile Reports on a three point scale (favorable, neutral, unfavorable). Ratings for the districts and total sample are presented in Table 1, while ratings for parents and staff are presented in Table 2.

Table 1
Overall Appearance of the
School Profile Reports By District

		School District		
	Total	Capital	Christina	Seaford
Rating	%	%	%	%
Favorable	74	68	77	74
Neutral	24	29	22	21
Unfavorable	2	3	1	5

Table 2
Overall Appearance of the
School Profile as Reported by Parents and Staff

	Total	Parents	Staff
Rating	%	%	%
Favorable	74	73	77
Neutral	24	25	21
Unfavorable	2	2	2

When asked to rate whether the charts and tables were easy to understand, neutral, or difficult to understand, 87% of all respondents found them easy to understand, 12% neutral, and 1% difficult to understand. Data within the districts were comparable to those for the overall sample regarding the charts and tables. Eighty-six percent of the parents and 87% of the staff rated the charts and tables as easy to understand.

Respondents were asked to rate the following five sections of the school profile for their level of understandability: district information, school information, student outcome information, course offering information and the school report. Ratings were done using a three-point rating scale (easy to understand, neutral, and difficult to understand). The school information section received the largest number of ratings for easy to understand with 89%, while district information was rated as easy to understand by 86%, the school report by 85%, student outcome by 81%, and course offerings by 78%. Ratings within the districts and among parents and staff were comparable to those observed for the entire sample of respondents.

When asked if they had become better informed about their high school by reading the high school profile 89% of the respondents agreed. Response rates in each of the three districts were favorable with 91% in Christina, 87% in Seaford and 84% in Capital agreeing that they had become better informed by reading the profile. Ninety-one percent of all parents and 79% of all staff responded that they had become better informed.

Respondents were asked to check those sections that provided them with important information. Table 3 presents the top 10 sections of the school profiles rated by respondents as providing important information. The two sections on Student Achievement had the highest overall ratings for providing important information. The section on Scholastic Aptitude Test scores had the largest number of ratings with 59%, while basic skills achievement was rated by 51% of the respondents. Trends in ratings within the districts were similar to those at the overall level with the exception of the Seaford School District. Respondents in Seaford tended to rate the district financial indicators, enrollment trends, and dropout sections (44%, 43% and 44%, respectively) as providing important information more than the respondents in the other two districts.

Table 3
School Profile Sections That Provide Important Information, By District

Section	Total %	School District: Capital %	Christina %	Seaford %
Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores	59	48	64	56
Student Achievement Basic Skills	51	47	52	52
School Course Offerings	38	38	40	33
Dropouts	37	39	34	44
The School Report	36	32	36	40
District Demographic Profile	36	36	36	39
The Student Body	35	34	35	35
Enrollment Trends	35	34	32	43
District Financial Indicators	34	33	30	44
Plans for the Future	33	33	32	36

The parent and staff ratings for each section are presented in Table 4. Ratings within these two groups were similar to those observed for the entire sample with a few exceptions. Parents tended to rate information on Scholastic Aptitude Test scores as important with a 62% response rate, while school staff rated the sections on demographic and enrollment information (41%, and 40% respectively) as important.

Table 4
School Profile Sections That
Provide Important Information for Parents and Staff

Section	Overall %	Parents %	School Staff %
Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores	59	62	45
Student Achievement Basic Skills	51	54	34
School Course Offerings	38	40	27
Dropouts	37	34	39
The School Report	36	37	37
District Demographic Profile	36	34	41
Enrollment Trends	35	33	40
The Student Body	35	34	38
District Financial Indicators	34	32	37
Plans for the Future	33	34	25

Other Information Not Presented in the Profiles

Respondents suggested that information regarding comparisons with other high schools in the state and nationally should have been included in the high school profiles. In addition, they suggested that information pertaining to disciplinary measures and statistics be included. Comments regarding the high school profile were very diverse, ranging from "an excellent report" and "very informative" to "a waste of money".

Parent/Community Group Meetings

In addition to the impact survey, the State Supervisor of the School Profile Program met for 15 minutes with a parent/community group from each of the five high schools during one of their regularly scheduled meetings. The goal of these meetings was two fold. The sessions served as opportunities to inform parent/community groups about the school profile program and to illicit comments about issues that may not have been addressed by the survey. Each meeting consisted of an overview of the program, including its purpose and initiation. In addition, anyone present at the meetings who had not previously received a school profile report was given one.

The overall perceptions of these groups were positive. They felt that the information reported in the high school profiles was both helpful and useful. It was also stated that the information was especially useful to parents who are not usually involved in school activities.

CONCLUSION

The Delaware High School Profile Reports released in April of 1990 were intended to provide the public with important information regarding the high schools. Since that time, the State Board of Education has expressed interest in determining the impact these reports have had on the public. The present report summarized the findings of a study developed to assess the impact. Although it was found that only 27% of all respondents had heard about the program and 15% had received a copy of a profile prior to the study, the public's response was favorable. The profiles were rated as having an overall favorable appearance, being understandable, and providing important information.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL PROFILE PROGRAM

IMPACT SURVEY

DELAWARE HIGH SCHOOL PROFILES

On April 5, 1990, at a press conference held during the School District Superintendents' Meeting, Governor Castle released the High School Profile Reports. All school districts were provided a quantity of reports and were instructed to distribute the reports using a plan which best met their needs. Since these are the first published Profile Reports, we are interested in peoples' opinions of the reports.

Please read the enclosed High School Profile Report and then take a few minutes to complete the following survey. **Your response is very important.** A return envelope has been provided for your convenience. Your answers are anonymous. The information gathered from this survey will be compiled and presented to the State Board of Education at a meeting in the near future.

Thank you for your participation in this survey. If you have any questions, please call me at 302-739-4583.

Sincerely,

Susanna Lee, State Supervisor
School Profile Program
Research and Evaluation Division
Department of Public Instruction
Dover, Delaware

RETURN DATE OCTOBER 1, 1990

SCHOOL PROFILE SURVEY

1. Please indicate which of the following categories apply to you:
   - ☐ Parent / Guardian
   - ☐ Grandparent
   - ☐ Business Person
   - ☐ School Board Member
   - ☐ School Staff
   - ☐ School Administrator
   - ☐ School Advisory Committee Member

2. Sex:
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female

3. Do you have children currently enrolled in school (grades K - 12)?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

4. Did you hear about the High School Profile program prior to this mailing?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

   If Yes, how did your hear about this program?
   - ☐ Other Parents
   - ☐ Newspapers
   - ☐ Local School / School District
   - ☐ Presentation
   - ☐ Other _____

5. Did you receive a High School Profile report prior to this mailing?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

   If Yes, from whom did you receive the Profile?_____

6. Please rate the overall appearance of the High School Profile:
   - ☐ Favorable
   - ☐ Neutral
   - ☐ Unfavorable

7. Were the charts and tables understandable?
   - ☐ Easy to Understand
   - ☐ Neutral
   - ☐ Difficult to Understand

8. Please rate each section of the High School Profile:

	Easy to Understand	Neutral	Difficult to Understand
District Information			
School Information			
Student Outcome Information			
Course Offering Information			
The School Report			

9. Have you become better informed about this High School by reading the Profile?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

10. Which sections provided you with important information?
    - ☐ District Demographic Profile
    - ☐ District Financial Indicators
    - ☐ The Student Body
    - ☐ Enrollment Trends
    - ☐ School Lunch Program
    - ☐ Student Transportation
    - ☐ Parent Involvement
    - ☐ Staff
    - ☐ Graduates
    - ☐ Plans for the Future
    - ☐ Dropouts
    - ☐ Student Achievement Basic Skills
    - ☐ Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores
    - ☐ School Course Offerings
    - ☐ The School Report

11. Was there any information not presented in the High School Profile that you feel should have been included? _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

12. Do you have any other comments regarding the High School Profile?

    _____

    _____

    _____